The Creed of the *Haafidh*, Abu Bakr al-Khateeb al-Baghdaadee (d. 463H)

An Issue Pertaining to the Attributes of *Allaah*

[Excerpt from the book "The Mountains of Knowledge", Salafi Publications]

This treatise is extant as a single preserved manuscript in adh-Dhaahiriyyah Book House in Damascus, collection no. 16.

THE ISNAD

The *Shaikh* Abu Taalib al-Mubaarak bin Alee as-Sairafee[1] informed us - granting us permission (to convey it) - saying: Abul-Hasan Muhammad bin Marzooq bin Abdur-Razzaaq az-Za'faraanee[2] informed us - reading it while I was listening in the month of Rabee' ul-Awwal of the year 506H - saying: The *Haafidh*, al-Khateeb Abu Bakr Ahmad bin Alee al-Baghdaadee informed us, saying:

THE TEXT

"A person from Damasacus wrote to me asking me about some matters" - and he mentioned them - "so I replied to them." Then he read to us the reply to what he had been questioned about saying:

"I comprehended what the esteemed *Shaikh* wrote - may *Allaah* make his support to perpetuate and may He make excellent his success and his guidance (to the right way) - and I relied upon what had been acquired by me of knowledge regarding him, which I pursue [---][3] upon his tracks, and that I respond to him with what I hope will be in agreement with his inclination. And I ask *Allaah* to protect me from erring and to grant me - from His Bounty and Mercy - success in arriving at the correct word and deed.

As for Speech Regarding the Attributes:

Then what has been reported of such Attributes in the Authentic Compilations (*as-Sunan as-Suhhaah*) - the *madhhab* of the *Salaf* - may *Allaah* be pleased with them all - is to affirm them, and to carry them upon their literal meanings (*alaa dhawaahirihaa*)[4] and to

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[1] Known as 'Ibn Khudair' (483-562H), from Baghdaad. Very truthful and a righteous man. Refer to Siyar A'laam un-Nubulaa (20/487).

[2] Known as 'al-Jallaab' (442-517H) from Baghdaad, a faqeeh, a muhaddith and steadfast. Refer to Siyar A'laam un-Nubulaa (19/471).

[3] A word undecipherable by the verifier of the treatise [Translators' note].

[4] Al-Khattaabee (d. 388H) said: "The *madhhab* of the *Salaf* (the Pious Predecessors) with regard to the *Sifaat* (Attributes of *Allaah*) is to affirm them as they are *alaa dhaahir* (with their apparent

deny (knowledge of) their true nature (*kaifiyyah*) and to negate *tashbeeh* (resemblance) for them.

But a people have denied these Attributes and so they nullified what *Allaah* - free from all imperfection - affirmed for Himself and another people amongst those who affirmed them actualised them and thus fell into something of *tashbeeh* (resemblance) and *takyeef* (enquiring into their true nature).

And what is correct is treading upon the course which is middle and balanced amidst all the affairs - and the religion of *Allaah* [lies] between the excessive person and the negligent one.

And the Principle in this Matter is:

That speaking about the Attributes is a branch of speaking about the Essence (*Dhaat*) and thus follows it exactly and takes its example. So when it is known that affirming the Lord of all the Worlds - the Mighty and Majestic - that it is an affirmation of existence, not an affirmation of the true nature (*kaifiyyah*), then it is exactly the same for affirming His Attributes. Indeed, it is an affirmation of their existence, not an affirmation of defining (their nature) and giving them a form.

So when we say: *Allaah* has a hand, hearing and seeing, then these are Attributes which *Allaah* the Exalted has affirmed for Himself and we do not say: The meaning of hand is 'power'[5] and nor do we say: The meaning of hearing and seeing is 'knowledge'. And nor do we say: Indeed, they are limbs. And we do not resemble them with the hands, hearing and sight which are indeed limbs and which are the mechanisms of the actions (of hearing, seeing and grasping etc.)

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meaning), negating any *tashbeeh* (resemblance) to them, nor *takyeef* (asking how they are)." Al-Ghuniyah an *Kalaam* wa Ahlihi - as quoted in Mukhtasir al-Uluww (no.137).

Qaadee AbuYa'laa (d. 458H) said: "It is not permissible to repel these narrations - as is the way of the group from the *Mu'tazilah*. Nor to become preoccupied with *ta'weel* - as is the way of the *Ash'ariyyah*. It is obligatory to carry them upon their *dhaahir* (apparent) meaning; and that the Attributes of *Allaah* do not resemble any one of His creation, nor do we have an *aqeedah* (belief) that there is any *tashbeeh* (resemblance) to them. Rather [we believe] in what has been reported from our *Shaikh* and our *Imaam*, Abu Abdullaah, Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Hanbal, and others from the Scholars of *Ashaabul-Hadeeth*." Ibtaal ut-Ta'weelaat (p.4)

Shaikh Abdul-Qaadir al-Jeelaanee (d. 561H) said: "It is essential to carry the attribute of *Allaah al-Istiwaa* (*Allaah*'s Ascending) upon its apparent sense - without *ta'weel*, and that He ascended by His *Dhaat* (self) over the Throne. *Istiwaa* does not mean sitting or touching - as the *Mujassimah* and *Karraamiyyah* say. Nor does it mean *uluww* (grandeur and highness) - as the *Ash'ariyyah* say; nor does it mean *isteelaa* (conquering and dominating over) - as the *Mu'tazilah* say. None of this is related in the *Sharee'ah*. Neither has this been related by any one of the *Salaf us-Saalih* (Pious Predecessors) from the *Sahaabah* and the *Taabi'een*, nor from the *Ashaabul-Hadeeth* (Scholars of *Hadeeth*). Rather, it is related from them that they carried the meaning of *Istiwaa* with its apparent (*dhaahir*) meaning." Al-Ghuniyat ut-Taalibeen (1/50) of Abdul Qaadir al-Jeelaanee.

[5] Abu Haneefah - may *Allaah* have mercy upon him - said in *Fiqh ul-Akbar*: "It is not to be said that 'His Hand means His power' because that is a nullification of the Attribute."

And we say: Affirming them is obligatory because *at-Tawqeef* (the texts of the *Qur'aan* and the *Sunnah*) have reported them and it is obligatory to negate *tashbeeh* (resemblance) from them, due to the saying of the Blessed and Exalted:

There is nothing like unto Him, and He is the All-Hearer, the All-Seer. [6]

and His saying - the Mighty and Majestic -:

And there is none co-equal or comparable unto Him. [7]

And when the People of Innovation say about the People of (Authentic) Narrations - due to their reporting of such *ahaadeeth* - that they report what does not befit *Tawheed* and which is not authentic - meaning by that to rebuke them and to confuse those whose knowledge is weak - and they accuse them with the disbelief of the people guilty of *tashbeeh* and the ignorance of the people of *ta'teel* (denial of the Attributes) - then they (the People of the Narration) reply to them that: In the Book of *Allaah* there are clear, decisive verses, the intent behind them is understood by their apparent meanings (*dhaahirihaa*) and there are unclear verses the meanings of which cannot be grasped except by referring them to the clear and decisive (verses). But it is obligatory to believe in all of them (*tasdeeq*) and to have faith in them all (*eemaan*). Similarly, the narrations of the Messenger (sas) are carried upon the same principle, they are revealed (just) like this Revelation - the unclear amongst them are referred to the clear and decisive amongst them - but all of them are to be accepted.

So the *Hadeeth* Reported About the Attributes are of Three Types:

Amongst them: The affirmed reports about which the Scholars of the narrations are agreed upon regarding their authenticity - due to their abundance and the integrity found in their transmission - therefore accepting them and having faith in them is obligatory along with protecting the heart from a belief that would overcome it and which would necessitate resembling *Allaah* to His creation., and describing Him with what does not befit Him such as limbs, particles, changing and movements.

The second type: Reports which are disreputable and with unfounded chains of narration and repulsive wordings. The people of the knowledge of transmission are agreed upon their falsity and it is not permissible to be occupied with such narrations and nor to stop over them (to consider them).

The third: Reports about which the people of knowledge are in disagreement regarding status of their transmission - so some of them, as opposed to all of them - accept them. In this situation, it is obligatory to strive in finding the truth regarding them and to inspect

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[6] Shooraah 42:11

[7] Ikhlaas 112:4

them closely - so that they are either associated with the people of acceptance (*Ahl ul-Qubool*) - or that they are placed in the confines of falsehood and corruption.

And as for specifying such *ahaadeeth*, then I have not occupied myself with them and a collection of them has not proceeded from me - but perhaps that will occur afterwards - if *Allaah* wills.[8]

[8] The chain of narration of this text is authentic to al-*Haafidh* al-Khateeb.